



U.S. Department of Justice
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NEWS RELEASE

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June 1, 2004

PARSONS, KANSAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE CRACK COCAINE

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Shannon Harris**, 29, Parsons, Kansas entered a guilty plea May 28, 2004, before U.S. District Judge G. Thomas Van Bebber to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams (1.76 ounces or more) of crack cocaine from January 1998 through September 2003. Harris also admitted to a forfeiture allegation, which requires him to forfeit all rights, interest, and ownership in proceeds from Harris' drug trafficking activities.

Melgren said that Harris admitted at his plea that beginning in at least January 1999, Harris and several others were engaged in distributing crack cocaine to other individuals in Southeast Kansas and Southwest Missouri. Harris and his co-defendants would obtain larger quantities of cocaine hydrochloride (powder) and then manufacture the cocaine base ("crack cocaine") or sometimes purchase large quantities of crack cocaine and sell it in smaller quantities. Harris distributed varying quantities of crack cocaine to lower level distributors. The amounts of crack cocaine ordered by this drug trafficking organization at one time was often 2 ounces, but could be as much as 9 ounces, which was subsequently distributed in Southeast Kansas and Southwest Missouri. Beginning in February 1, 2002 residences in Parsons, Kansas were utilized to store, package, and distribute the crack cocaine and marijuana. One of the residences utilized was leased to Harris.

Due to his prior felony drug conviction, Harris faces a minimum of twenty years to a maximum of life in federal prison, without parole, for conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute more than 50 grams (1.76 ounces) of crack cocaine. Sentencing is set for August 16, 2004.

Co-defendants in this case, Adam Davis and Joseph Riley are scheduled for change of plea hearings on June 7, 2004. A jury trial has been scheduled to commence July 13, 2004, for the remaining co-defendants, which includes Franchester Griffin, Debra Loyd, Timothy Hans Ford, James Jackson, David Robison, and Wendell Martin.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Parsons Police Department, the Labette County Sheriff's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, the Coffeyville Police Department, the Winfield Police Department, the Joplin, Missouri Police Department, the Labette County Attorney's Office, and the Cowley County Attorney's Office in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Rask in this prosecution.